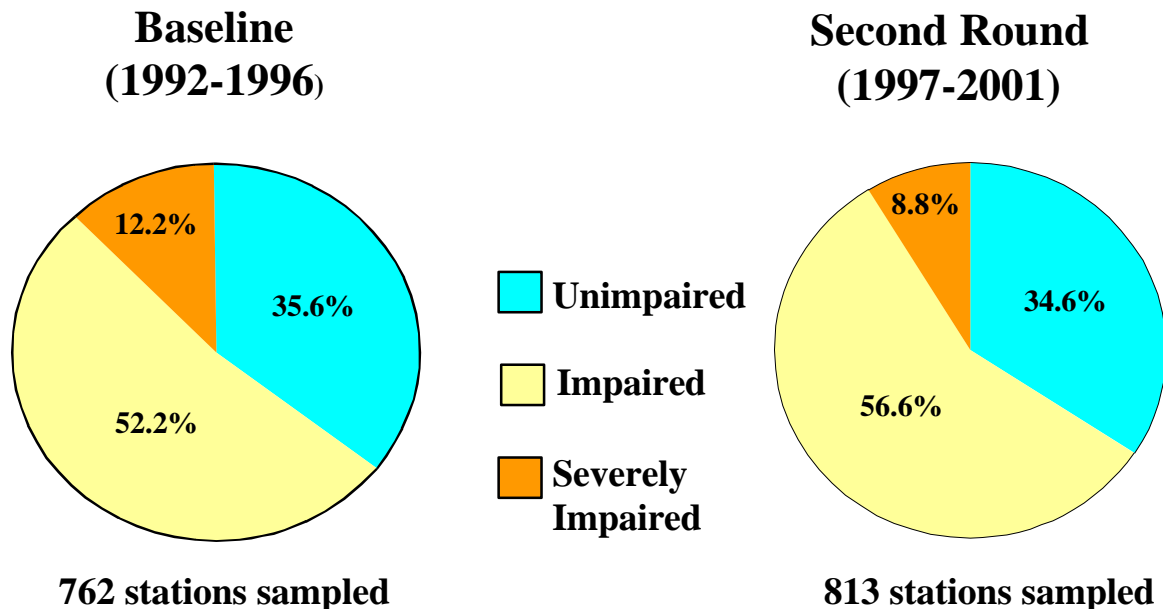**MILESTONE: By 2005, 50% of assessed non-tidal river miles will support healthy, sustainable, biological communities.**

INDICATOR: Aquatic Life - Benthic Macroinvertebrates (AMNET)

Baseline
(1992-1996)

Second Round
(1997-2001)

Unimpaired

Impaired

Severely Impaired

762 stations sampled

813 stations sampled

Benthic macroinvertebrates, i.e., bottom–dwelling populations of aquatic insect larvae and other organisms that live in stream beds, are used to indicate the health of aquatic ecosystems. The 2nd round of AMNET benthic macroinvertebrate biological monitoring statewide is complete, including sampling and analysis.   With 813 stations sampled, results reveal 34.5% of bottom dwelling aquatic communities are "Unimpaired", 56.5% are "Impaired", and 8.8% are "Severely Impaired".   It is apparent that a statewide shift in biological condition from "Severely Impaired" to "Moderately Impaired", with little change in "Unimpaired", has occurred over the past five years. The initial results showed that 35.6% were "Unimpaired", 52.2% were "Impaired", and 12.2% were "Severely Impaired". The decline in the percent "Severely Impaired" can be considered improvement. However, the decline in the percent "Unimpaired" does not represent progress towards meeting the specific goal of 50% "Unimpaired" stations by 2005. Note that there was an increase in the number of sites sampled between the baseline sampling and the second round. The additional stations were established to assess portions of streams or individual tributaries not included in the baseline assessment.   The addition of the stations made no significant impacts on the percentage of sites within each of the three assessment categories.   The additional sites do, however, give a clearer picture of aquatic life conditions on a site-specific basis.

Data Source: NJDEP Water Monitoring Management, DWM

This fact sheet contains the most current, available data. For additional information development of this indicator, please see page 15 of the Water Resources Section of the Environmental Indicators Technical Report, 1st Edition.